CLAIMS

1.   A method of reconfiguring software in a communications system, the method comprising a first communications station transmitting a software reconfiguration message to a second communications station, the software reconfiguration message including indicia which is useable by the second station to estimate how long it will take to reconfigure itself, the second station receiving the message and using the indicia estimates its reconfiguration time, the second station sending a message giving an indication of the reconfiguration time to the first station, and the first station in response to determining the reconfiguration time, waiting until after the time has elapsed before using the reconfigured software in communication with the second station.

2.   A method as claimed in claim 1, characterised in that the second station stores the maximum time required for reconfiguration and the indicia sent in the software reconfiguration message is used to determine what proportion of that time will be required to implement the reconfiguration.

3.   A method as claimed in Claim 2, characterised in that the maximum reconfiguration time of the second station and fractions of the maximum reconfiguration time are stored in a ROM and in that the indicia in the software reconfiguration message are used to provide a ROM address.

4.   A method as claimed in claim 1, characterised in that the indicia in the software reconfiguration message relate to a particular layer of the software to be reconfigured and in that the second station stores estimates of reconfiguration times of each of the software layers.

5.   A method as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 4, characterised by having a plurality of second stations, at least 2 of which second stations have different maximum reconfiguration times.

6.   A method as claimed in any one of claims 1 to 4, characterised in that the first station reconfigures its configuration software relating to the or the respective second station by the expiry of the reconfiguration time.

7.   A software reconfiguration message for transmission from a first station to a second station, the message including indicia which is useable by the second station to estimate the time it will take to reconfigure itself.

8.   A message as claimed in claim 7, characterised in that the indicia is useable to express the degree of complexity of reconfiguration processes.

9.   A message as claimed in claim 8, characterised in that the indicia expresses the degree of complexity as a proportion of the maximum reconfiguration time.

10.   A message as claimed in claim 8, characterised in that the indicia includes information indicating the software layer to be reconfigured.

11.   A communication system comprising a primary station and at least one secondary station, the primary station including a transceiver, a processor and a store for storing the configuration software of the or each secondary station, and the or each secondary station comprising a transceiver, a processor, a store for storing configuration software, means for reconfiguring at least some of the configuration software in the store, means for estimating the reconfiguration time on the basis of indicia included in a reconfiguration message transmitted by the primary station, the reconfiguration time being transmitted to the primary station.

12.   A system as claimed in claim 11, characterised by the processor in the primary station including timing means for causing the configuration

software in respect of the secondary station to be reconfigured by the expiry of the reconfiguration time transmitted by the secondary station.

13.   A system as claimed in claim 11, characterised in that the or each secondary station includes a non-volatile memory storing at respective locations the maximum software reconfiguration time and predetermined fractions of the said maximum reconfiguration time and in that the primary station includes means for including a memory location information in said indicia.

14.   A station having a transceiver, a processor, a store for storing configuration software, means, responsive to an external message, for reconfiguring software in the store, and means for estimating a reconfiguration time in response to indicia in the external message and for causing the transceiver to transmit the estimated reconfiguration time.

15.   A station as claimed in claim 14, characterised in that there is provided a non-volatile memory storing at respective locations the maximum software reconfiguration time and predetermined fractions of the said maximum reconfiguration time representing estimates and in that one of said estimates is selected in response to the received indicia.